



U.S. Air Force Behavioral Science Manual: The Padawan Learner¹

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Background

- Annually the USAF pays for select officers to receive PhD training in social work in preparation for becoming behavioral scientists² in five Family Medicine Residency Programs
- Contrary to expectations, these PhD programs provide very little training specific to the behavioral science profession
- This project examines current and former Department of Defense (DoD) behavioral scientists' opinions on their training and whether having a user manual at the beginning of their careers would have impacted their acquisition of competence
- Participants were also asked to provide feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of a prototype manual tailored to USAF behavioral scientists
- Findings of this project will provide groundwork for the USAF's first ever behavioral science user manual

Methods

- This project utilized a single group sample survey of current and former DoD behavioral scientists
- Purposive sampling was used to send an interview questionnaire to 11 current and former DoD behavioral scientists
- Participation requirements included DoD affiliation and at least one year of behavioral science experience
- Frequency distributions were used to examine demographics and survey responses

"Write a chapter on research"

"Standardize and define titles and terms"

Table 1. Demographic information on project participants (N = 11)

Mean Age	51.0 yo (range = 40-61)
Military Branch	Air Force (82%)
Professional Background	Social Work (82%)
Active Duty/Civilian Status	Active Duty (73%)
Mean Years as Behavioral Scientist	4.3 (range = 2-9)
PhD Trained	91%
How Helpful was PhD Training?	2.5 on rising scale to 5 (range = 2-4)

Table 2. Expert responses to project questions (N = 11)

Was Manual Helpful	Yes (100%) ★
Mean Time Until Competent Without Manual	18.8 months (range = 6-30) ★
Mean Time Until Competent With Manual	8.1 months (range = 3-18) ★
Most Helpful Chapters	Roles & Responsibilities and Curriculum Development
Least Helpful Chapter	The Culture of Family Medicine

"Leave off Chapter 1"

"You need to publish this"

Results

- 100% of participants felt that the manual would help new behavioral scientist gain competence
- Participants felt that competence would be achieved 11 months earlier by using the manual
- The chapters *Roles and Responsibilities* and *Curriculum Development* were deemed most helpful
- The chapter *The Culture of Family Medicine* was deemed the least helpful

Conclusion

Participants overwhelmingly viewed the manual as helpful. Further, they estimated that using it would decrease the time that it took for new behavioral scientists to achieve competence by 11 months. The USAF is encouraged to adopt this user manual as a method for educating PhD applicants about the behavioral science profession as well as a tool for orientating new educators during their first assignment. Finally, the USAF is encouraged to update this manual annually for relevance.

References

Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. R. (2012). *Brooks/Cole Empowerment Series: Essential research methods for social work*. Cengage Learning.

"Excellent practical advice"

"This document would have been of immense help"

¹The views expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or the Department of the Air Force. ; ² Refers to faculty member